Faith and Life

A Sermon
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"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."—2 Peter 1:1-4.

THE two most important things in our holy religion are faith and life. He who shall rightly understand these two words is not far from being a master in experimental theology. Faith and life! these are vital points to a Christian. They possess so intimate a connection with each other that they are by no means to be severed; God hath so joined them together, let no man seek to put them asunder. You shall never find true faith unattended by true godliness; on the other hand, you shall never discover a truly holy life which has not for its root and foundation a living faith upon the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Woe unto those who seek after the one without the other! There be some who cultivate faith and forget holiness; these may be very high in orthodoxy, but they shall be very deep in damnation, in that day when God shall condemn those who hold the truth in unrighteousness, and make the doctrine of Christ to pander to their lusts. There are others who have strained after holiness of life, but have denied the faith; these are comparable unto the Pharisees of old, of whom the Master said, they were "whitewashed sepulchres;" they were fair to look upon externally, but inwardly, because the living faith was not there, they were full of dead men's bones and all manner of uncleanness. Ye must have faith, for this is the foundation; ye must have holiness of life, for this is the superstructure. Of what avail is the mere foundation of a building to a man in the day of tempest? Can he hide himself among sunken stones and concrete? He wants a house to cover him, as well as a foundation upon which that house might have been built; even so we need the superstructure of spiritual life if we would have comfort in the day of doubt. But seek not a holy life without faith, for that would be to erect a house which can afford no permanent shelter, because it has no foundation on a rock—a house which must come down with a tremendous crash in the day when the rain descends, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon it. Let faith and life be

put together, and, like the two abutments of an arch, they shall make your piety strong. Like the horses of Pharaoh's chariot, they pull together gloriously. Like light and heat streaming from the same sun, they are alike full of blessing. Like the two pillars of the temple, they are for glory and for beauty. They are two streams from the fountain of grace; two lamps lit with holy fire; two olive-trees watered by heavenly care; two stars carried in Jesus' hand. The Lord grant that we may have both of these to perfection, that his name may be praised.

Now, it will be clear to all, that in the four verses before us, our apostle has most excellently set forth the necessity of these two things—twice over he insists upon the faith, and twice over upon holiness of life. We will take the first occasion first.

I. Observe, in the first place, what he says concerning the *character and the origin of faith,* and then concerning *the character and origin of spiritual life.*

"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." So far *the faith.* "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." These two verses, you see, concern the *spiritual life* which comes with the faith.

Let us begin where Peter begins, with the FAITH. You have here a description of true saving faith.

First, you have a description of its *source.* He says, "to them that *have obtained* like precious faith." See, then, my brethren, faith does not grow in man's heart by nature; it is a thing which is *obtained.* It is not a matter which springs up by a process of education, or by the example and excellent instruction of our parents; it is a thing which has to be obtained. Not imitation, but regeneration; not development, but conversion. All our good things come from without us, only evil can be educed from within us. Now, that which is *obtained* by us must be given to us; and well are we taught in Scripture that "faith is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." Although faith is the act of man, yet it is the work of God. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;" but that heart must, first of all, have been renewed by divine grace before it ever can be capable of the act of saving faith. Faith, we say, is man's act, for we are commanded to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," and we shall be saved. At the same time, faith is God's gift, and wherever we find it, we may know that it did not come there from the force of nature, but from a work of divine grace. How this magnifies the grace of God, my brethren, and how low this casts human nature! Faith. Is it not one of the simplest things? Merely to depend upon the blood and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, does it not seem one of the easiest of virtues? To be nothing, and to let him be everything—to be still, and to let him work for me, does not this seem to be the most elementary of all the Christian graces? Indeed, so it is; and yet, even to this first principle and rudiment, poor human nature is so fallen and so utterly undone, that it cannot attain unto!

Brethren, the Lord must not only open the gates of heaven to us at last, but he must open the gates of our heart to faith at the first. It is not enough for us to know that *he* must make us perfect in every good work to do his will, but we must be taught that *he* must even give us a desire after Christ; and when this is given, he must enable us to give the grip of the hand of faith whereby Jesus Christ becomes our Saviour and Lord. Now, the question comes (and we will try and make the text of today, a text of examination all the way through) have we obtained this faith? Are we conscious that we have been operated upon by the Holy Spirit? Is there a vital principle in us which was not there originally? Do we know today the folly of carnal confidence? Have we a hope that we have been enabled through divine grace to cast away all our own righteousness and every dependence, and are we now, whether we sink or swim, resting entirely upon the person, the righteousness, the blood, the intercession, the precious merit of our Lord Jesus Christ? If not, we have cause enough to tremble; but if we have, the while the apostle writes, "Unto them that have obtained like precious faith," he writes to us, and across the interval of centuries his benediction comes as full and fresh as ever, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you."

Peter having described the origin of this faith, proceeds to describe its *object.* The word "through" in our translation, might, quite as correctly, have been rendered "in"—"faith in the righteousness of our God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." True faith, then, is a faith in Jesus Christ, but it is a faith in Jesus Christ *as divine.* That man who believes in Jesus Christ as simply a prophet, as only a great teacher, has not the faith which will save him. Charity would make us hope for many Unitarians, but honesty compels us to condemn them without exception, so far as vital godliness is concerned. It matters not how intelligent may be their conversation, nor how charitable may be their manners, nor how patriotic may be their spirit, if they reject Jesus Christ as very God of very God, we believe they shall without doubt perish everlastingly. Our Lord uttered no dubious words when he said, "He that believeth not shall be damned," and we must not attempt to be more liberal than the Lord himself. Little allowance can I make for one who receives Jesus the prophet, and rejects him as God. It is an atrocious outrage upon common sense for a man to profess to be a believer in Christ at all, if he does not receive his divinity. I would undertake, at any time, to prove to a demonstration, that if Christ were not God, he was the grossest impostor who ever lived. One of two things, he was either divine or a villain. There is no stopping between the two. I cannot imagine a character more evil than that which would be borne by a man who should lead his followers to adore him as God, without ever putting in a word by way of caveat, to stop their idolatry; nay, who should have spoken in terms so ambiguous, that two thousand years after his death, there should be found millions of persons resting upon him as God. I say, if he were not God, the atrocity of his having palmed himself upon us, his disciples, as God, puts aside altogether from consideration any of the apparent virtues of his life. He was the grossest of all deceivers, if he was not "very God of very God." O beloved, you and I have

found no difficulties here; when we have beheld the record of his miracles, when we have listened to the testimony of his divine Father, when we have heard the word of the inspired apostles, when we have felt the majesty of his own divine influence in our own hearts, we have graciously accepted him as "the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father;" and, as John bear witness of him and said, "The Word was in the beginning with God, and the Word was God," even so have we received him; so that at this day, he that was born of the virgin Mary, Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews, is to us "God over all, blessed for ever."

"Jesus is worthy to receive
Honour and power divine:
And blessings more than we can give,
Be Lord for ever thine."

Now, beloved friends, have we heartily and joyfully received Jesus Christ as God? My hearer, if thou hast not, I pray thee seek of God the faith that saves, for thou hast it not as yet, nor art thou in the way to it. Who but a God could bear the weight of sin? Who but a God shall be the "same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?" Concerning whom but a God could it be said, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." We have to do with Christ, and we should be consumed if he changed; inasmuch, then, as he does not change, and we are not consumed, he must be divine, and our soul rolls the entire burden of its care and guilt upon the mighty shoulders of the everlasting God, who—

"Bears the earth's huge pillars up,
And spreads the heavens abroad."

Remark in further dwelling upon the text, that the apostle has put in another word beside "God", and that is, "of God and *our Saviour."* As if the glory of the Godhead might be too bright for us, he has attempered it by gentler words "our Saviour." Now, to trust Jesus Christ as divine, will save no man, unless there be added to this a resting in him as the great propitiatory sacrifice. Jesus Christ is our Saviour because he became a substitute for guilty man. He having taken upon himself the form of manhood by union with our nature, stood in the room, place, and stead of sinners. When the whole tempest of divine wrath was about to spend itself on man, he endured it all for his elect; when the great whip of the law must fall, he bared his own shoulders to the lash; when the cry was heard, "Awake, O sword!" it was against Christ the Shepherd, against the man who was the fellow to the eternal God. And because he thus suffered in the place and stead of man, he received power from on high to become the Saviour of man, and to bring many sons into glory, because he had been made perfect through suffering. Now, have we received Jesus Christ as *our Saviour?* Happy art thou, if thou hast laid thy hand upon the head of him who was slain for sinners. Be glad, and rejoice in the Lord without ceasing, if today that blessed Redeemer who has ascended upon high has become *thy* Saviour, delivered *thee* from sin, passing by *thy* transgressions,

and making thee to be accepted in the beloved. A Saviour is he to us when he delivers us from the curse, punishment, guilt and power of sin, "He shall save his people from their sins." O thou great God, be thou my Saviour, mighty to save.

But be pleased to notice the word "righteousness." It is a faith in the *righteousness* of our God and our Saviour. In these days, certain divines have tried to get rid of all idea of atonement; they have taught that faith in Jesus Christ would save men, apart from any faith in him as a sacrifice. Ah, brethren, it does not say, "faith in the teaching of God our Saviour;" I do not find here that it is written, "faith in the character of God our Saviour, as our exemplar." No, but "faith in the righteousness of God our Saviour." That righteousness, like a white robe, must be cast around us. I have not received Jesus Christ at all, but I am an adversary and an enemy to him, unless I have received him as Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness. There is his perfect life; that life was a life for me; it contains all the virtues, in it there is no spot; it keeps the law of God, and makes it honourable; my faith takes that righteousness of Jesus Christ, and it is cast about me, and I am then so beauteously, nay, so perfectly arrayed, that even the eye of God can see neither spot nor blemish in me. Have we, then, today a faith in the righteousness of God our Saviour? For no faith but this can ever bring the soul into a condition of acceptance before the Most High. 'Why," saith one, "these are the very simplicities of the gospel." Beloved, I know they are, and, therefore, do we deal them out this morning, for, thanks be to God, it is the simplicities which lie at the foundation; and it is rather by simplicities than by mysteries that a Christian is to try himself and to see whether he be in the faith or no. Put the question, brethren, have we, then, this like precious faith in God and our Saviour Jesus Christ?

Our apostle has not finished the description, without saying that it is *"like* precious faith." All faith is the same sort of faith. Our faith may not be like that of Peter, in degree, but if it be genuine, it is like it as to its nature, its origin, its objects, and its results. Here is a blessed equality. Speak of "liberty, equality, and fraternity," you shall only find these things carried out within the Church of Christ. There is indeed a blessed equality here, for the poorest little-faith who ever crept into heaven on its hands and knees, has a *like* precious faith with the mighty apostle Peter. I say, brethren, if the one be gold, so is the other; if the one can move mountains, so can the other; for remember, that the privileges of mountain-moving, and of plucking up the trees, and casting them into the sea, are not given to great faith, but "if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed," it shall be done. Little faith has a royal descent and is as truly of divine birth as is the greatest and fullest assurance which ever made glad the heart of man, hence it ensures the same inheritance at the last, and the same safety by the way. It is "like precious faith."

He tells us too, that faith is *"precious;"* and is it not precious? for it deals with precious things, with precious promises, with precious blood, with a precious redemption, with all the preciousness of the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Well may that be a

precious faith which supplies our greatest want, delivers us from our greatest danger, and admits us to the greatest glory. Well may that be called "precious faith," which is the symbol of our election, the evidence of our calling, the root of all our graces, the channel of communion, the weapon of prevalence, the shield of safety, the substance of hope, the evidence of eternity, the guerdon of immortality, and the passport of glory. O for more of this inestimably precious faith. Precious faith, indeed it is.

When the apostle, Simon Peter, writes "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," does he write to *you?* does he write to me? If not, if we are not here addressed, remember that we can never expect to hear the voice which says, "Come ye blessed of my Father;" but we are today in such a condition, that dying as we now are, "Depart ye cursed" must be the thunder which shall roll in our ears, and drive us down to hell. So much, then, concerning faith.

Now we shall turn to notice with great brevity, the LIFE. "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." Here we have, then, brethren, the *fountain and source* of our spiritual life. Just as faith is a boon which is to be obtained, so you will perceive that our spiritual life is a principle which is *given.* A thing which is given to us, too, by divine power—"according as his *divine power* hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." To give life at all is the essential attribute of God. This is an attribute which he will not alienate; to save and to destroy belong unto the Sovereign of heaven. "He can create, and he destroy," is one of the profoundest notes in the ascription of our praise. Suppose a corpse before us. How great a pretender would he be who should boast that it was in his power to restore it to life. Certainly, it would be even a greater pretence if anyone should say that he could give to himself or to another the divine life, the spiritual life by which a man is made a Christian. My brethren, you who are partakers of the divine nature, know that by nature you were dead in trespasses and sins, and would have continued so until this day if there had not been an interposition of divine energy on your behalf. There you lay in the grave of your sin, rotten, corrupt. The voice of the minister called to you, but you did not hear. You were often bidden to come forth, but ye did not and could not come. But when the Lord said, "Lazarus, come forth," then Lazarus came forth; and when he said to you, "Live," then you lived also, and the spiritual life beat within you, with joy and peace through believing. This we ought never to forget, because, let us never fail to remember, that if our religion is a thing which sprang from ourselves, it is of the flesh, and must die. That which is born of the flesh in its best and most favourable moments, is flesh, and only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. "Ye must be born again." If a man's religious life be only a refinement of his ordinary life, if it be only a high attainment of the natural existence, then is it not the spiritual life, and does not prepare him for the eternal life before the throne

of God. No, we must have a supernatural spark of heavenly flame kindled within us. Just as nothing but the soul can quicken the body and make it live, so the Spirit alone can quicken the soul and make the soul live. We must have the third master-principle infused, or else we shall be but natural men, made after the image of the first Adam. We must have, I say, the new spirit, or else we shall not be like the second Adam, who was made a quickening spirit. Only of the Christian can we say that he is spirit, soul, and body; the ungodly man has only soul and body, and as to spiritual existence, he is as dead as the body would be if there were no soul. Now the implantation of this new principle, called the spirit, is a work of divine power. *Divine power!* What stupendous issues are grasped in that term, divine power! It was this which digged the deep foundations of the earth and sea! Divine power, it is this which guides the marches of the stars of heaven! Divine power! it is this which holds up the pillars of the universe, and which one day shall shake them, and hurry all things back to their native nothingness. Yet the selfsame power which is required to create a world and to sustain it, is required to make man a Christian, and unless that power be put forth, the spiritual life is not in any one of us.

You will perceive, dear friends, that the apostle Peter wished to see this divine life in a healthy and vigorous state, and therefore he prays that *grace and peace may be multiplied.* Divine power is the foundation of this life; grace is the food it feeds upon, and peace is the element in which it lives most healthily. Give a Christian much grace, and his spiritual life will be like the life of a man who is well clothed and nurtured; keep the spiritual life without abundant grace, and it becomes lean, faint, and ready to die; and though die it cannot, yet will it seem as though it gave up the ghost, unless fresh grace be bestowed. Peace, I say, is the element in which it flourishes most. Let a Christian be much disturbed in mind, let earthly cares get into his soul, let him have doubts and fears as to his eternal safety, let him lose a sense of reconciliation to God, let his adoption be but dimly before his eyes, and you will not see much of the divine life within him. But oh! if God shall smile upon the life within you, and you get much grace from God, and your soul dwells much in the balmy air of heavenly peace, then shall you be strong to exercise yourself unto godliness, and your whole life shall adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour.

Observe, again, that in describing this life, he speaks of it as one which was conferred upon us by our being *called.* He says, "We were called unto glory and virtue." I find translators differ here. Many of them think the word should be "By"—"We are called by the glory and virtue of God"—that is, there is a manifestation of all the glorious attributes of God, and of all the efficacious virtue and energy of his power in the calling of every Christian. Simon Peter himself was at his fishing and in his boat, but Jesus said to him, "Follow me;" and at once he followed Christ. He says there was in that calling, the divine glory and virtue; and, doubtless, when you and I shall get to heaven, and see things as they are, we shall discover in our effectual calling of God to grace, a glory as great as in the creation of worlds,

and a virtue as great as in the healing of the sick, when virtue went from the garments of a Saviour. Now, can we say today, that we have a life within us which is the result of divine power, and have we, upon searching ourselves, reason to believe, dear friends, that there is that within us which distinguishes us from other men, because we have been called out by mankind by the glory and energy of the divine power? I am afraid some of us must say *"Nay."* Then the Lord in his mercy yet bring us into the number of his people. But if we can, however, tremblingly say, "Yes, I trust there is something of the life in me;" then as Peter did so, do I wish for you that benediction, "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." O brethren, whatever men may say against the faith of God, there is nothing in the world which creates virtue like true faith. Wherever true faith enters, though it be into the heart of a harlot or of a thief, what a change it makes! See her there; she has polluted herself many times; she has gone far into sin. Mary has been a sinner; she hears the preaching of the Saviour; standing in the crowd she listens to him one day as he preaches concerning the prodigal, and how the loving father pressed him to his bosom; she comes to Jesus and she finds forgiveness. Is she a harlot any longer? Nay, there she is, washing his feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head. The woman who was a sinner, hates her evil ways and loves her gracious Lord. We may say of her, "But she is washed, but she is sanctified, but she is saved." Take Saul of Tarsus. Foaming with blood, breathing out threatenings, he is going to Damascus to drag the saints of God to prison. On the road he is struck down; by divine mercy he is led to put his trust in Jesus. Is he a persecutor any longer? See that earnest apostle beaten with rods—shipwrecked—in labours more abundant than all the rest of them—counting not his life dear unto him, that he may win Christ and be found in him. Saul of Tarsus becomes a majestic proof of what the grace of God can do. See Zaccheus, the grasping publican, distributing his wealth, the Ephesians burning their magical books, the jailer washing the apostle's stripes. Take the case of many now present. Let memory refresh itself this morning, with the recollection of the change which has been wrought in you. We have nothing to boast of; God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of Christ, but yet some of us are wonderful instances of renewing grace. We were unclean, our mouths could utter blasphemy; our temper was hot and terrible; our hands were unrighteous; we were altogether as an unclean thing, but how changed now! Again, I say, we boast of nothing which we now are, for by the grace of God we are what we are, yet the change is something to be wondered at. Has divine grace wrought this change in you? Be not weary with my reiteration of this question. Let me put it again to you till I get an answer; nay, till I force you to an answer: Have you this precious faith? Can you not answer the question? Then, have you not that divine life, that life which is given by divine calling? If you have the one, you have the other; and if you have not both, you have neither; for where there is the one, the other must come, and where the one has come, the other has been there.

II. I have thus fully but feebly brought the subject before you, allow me to remind you that another verse remains which handles the same topics. In the fourth verse, he deals with the privileges of faith, and also with the privileges of the spiritual life.

Notice the PRIVILEGE OF FAITH first. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises"—here is the faith, "That by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Here is the life resulting from the faith. Now, the *privileges of faith* first. The privileges of faith are, that we have given to us "Exceeding great and precious promises." "Great and precious"—two words which do not often come together. Many things are great which are not precious, such as great rocks, which are of little value; on the other hand, many things are precious which are not great—such as diamonds and other jewels, which cannot be very great if they be very precious. But here we have promises which are so great, that they are not less than infinite, and so precious, that they are not less than divine. I shall not attempt to speak about their greatness or their preciousness, but just give a catalogue of them, and leave you to guess at both. We have some of them which are like birds in the hands—we have them already; other promises are like birds in the bush, only that they are just as valuable and as sure as those which are in the hand.

Note here, then, we have received by precious faith the promise and *pardon.* Hark thee, my soul, all thy sins are forgiven thee. He who hath faith in Christ hath no sin to curse him, his sins are washed away, they have ceased to be; they have been carried on the scape-goat's head into the wilderness; they are drowned in the Red Sea; they are blotted out; they are thrown behind God's back; they are cast into the depths of the sea. Here is a promise of perfect pardon. Is not this great and precious?—as great as your sins are; and if your sins demanded a costly ransom, this precious promise is as great as the demand.

Then comes the *righteousness* of Christ: you are not only pardoned, that is, washed and made clean, but you are dressed, robed in garments such as no man could ever weave. The vesture is divine. Jehovah himself has wrought out your righteousness for you; the holy life of Jesus the Son of God, has become your beauteous dress, and you are covered with it. Christian, is not this an exceeding great and precious promise? The law was great—this righteousness is as great as the law. The law asked a precious revenue from man, more than humanity could pay—the righteousness of Christ has paid it all. Is it not great and precious?

Then next comes *reconciliation.* You were strangers, but you are brought nigh by the blood of Christ. Once aliens, but now fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God. Is not this great and precious?

Then comes your *adoption.* "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus

Christ, if so be we suffer with him that we may be glorified together." Oh, how glorious is this great and precious promise of adoption!

Then we have the promise of *providence:* "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose." "Thy place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks." "Thy bread shall be given thee and thy waters shall be sure." "As thy days thy strength shall be." "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God." "When thou passest through the rivers, I will be with thee, the floods shall not overflow thee. When thou goest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." When I think of providence, the greatness of its daily gifts, and the preciousness of its hourly boons, I may well say, here is an exceeding great and precious promise.

Then you have the promise too, that you shall never taste of death but shall only sleep in Jesus. "Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they cease from their labours; and their works do follow them." Nor does the promise cease here, you have the promise of *a resurrection.* "For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." Beloved, we know that if Christ rose from the dead, so also them who sleep in Jesus, will the Lord bring with him. Nor is this all, for we shall *reign with Jesus;* at his coming, we shall be glorified with him, we shall sit upon his throne, even as he has overcome and sits with his Father upon his throne. The harps of heaven, the streets of glory, the trees of paradise, the river of the water of life, the eternity of immaculate bliss—all these, God hath promised to them who love him. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, but he hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit;" and by our faith we have grasped them, and we have today "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Now, beloved, see how rich faith makes you!—what treasure!—what a costly regalia!—what gold mines!—what oceans of wealth!—what mountains of sparkling treasures has God conferred upon you by faith!

But we must not forget the *life,* and with that we close. The text says, he has given us this promise, *"that"*—"in order that." What then? What are all these treasures lavished for? For what these pearls? For what these jewels? For what, I say, these oceans of treasure? For what? Is the end worthy of the means? Surely God never giveth greater store than the thing which he would purchase will be worth. We may suppose, then, the end to be very great when such costly means have been given; and what is the end? Why, "that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." O, my brethren, if you have these mercies today by faith, do see to it that the result is obtained. Be not content to be made rich in these great and precious promises, without answering God's design in your being thus enriched. That design, you perceive, is twofold; it

is first that you may be partakers of the divine nature; and, secondly, that you may escape the corruption which is in the world.

To be a partaker of the divine nature is not, of course, to become God. That cannot be. The essence of Deity is not to be participated in by the creature. Between the creature and the Creator there must ever be a gulf fixed in respect of essence; but as the first man Adam was made in the image of God, so we, by the renewal of the Holy Spirit, are in a yet diviner sense made in the image of the Most High, and are partakers of the divine nature. We are, by grace, made like God. "God is love;" we become love—"He that loveth is born of God." God is truth; we become true, and we love that which is true, and we hate the darkness and the lie. God is good, it is his very name; he makes us good by his grace, so that we become the pure in heart who shall see God. Nay, I will say this, that we become partakers of the divine nature in even a higher sense than this—in fact, in any sense, anything short of our being absolutely divine. Do we not become members of the body of the divine person of Christ? And what sort of union is this—"members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones?" The same blood which flows in the head flows in the hand, and the same life which quickens Christ, quickens his people; for, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Nay, as if this were not enough, we are married into Christ. He hath betrothed us unto himself in righteousness and in faithfulness; and as the spouse must, in the nature of things, be a partaker of the same nature as the husband, so Jesus Christ first became partaker of flesh and blood that they twain might be one flesh; and then he makes his Church partakers of the same spirit, that they twain may be one spirit; for he who is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Oh, marvellous mystery! we look into it, but who shall understand it? One with Jesus, by eternal union one, married to him; so one with him that the branch is not more one with the vine than we are a part of the Lord, our Saviour, and our Redeemer. Rejoice in this, brethren, ye are made partakers of the divine nature, and all these promises are given to you in order that you may show this forth among the sons of men, that ye are like God, and not like ordinary men; that ye are different now from what flesh and blood would make you, having been made participators of the nature of God.

Then the other result which follows from it, was this, "Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Ah, beloved, it were ill that a man who is alive should dwell in corruption. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" said the angel to Magdalene. Should the living dwell among the dead? Should divine life be found amongst the corruptions of worldly lusts? The bride of Christ drunken! Frequenting the ale-house! A member of Christ's body found intoxicated in the streets, or lying, or blaspheming, or dishonest! God forbid. Shall I take the members of Christ, and make them members of a harlot? How can I drink the cup of the Lord, and drink the cup of Belial? How can it be possible that I can have life, and yet dwell in the black, dark, foul, filthy, pestiferous tomb of the world's lusts? Surely, brethren, from these open lusts and sins ye have escaped: have ye also escaped from

slothfulness? Have ye clean escaped from carnal security? Are we seeking day by day to live above worldliness, and love of the things of the world, and the ensnaring avarice which they nourish? Remember, it is for this that you have been enriched with the treasures of God. Do not, oh, I conjure you, do not, chosen of God and beloved by him, and so graciously enriched, do not suffer all this lavish treasure to be wasted upon you.

There is nothing which my heart desires more than to see you, the members of this Church, distinguished for holiness: it is the Christian's crown and glory. An unholy Church! it is of no use to the world, and of no esteem among men. Oh! it is an abomination, hell's laughter, heaven's abhorrence. And the larger the Church, the more influential, the worse nuisance does it become, when it becomes dead and unholy. The worst evils which have ever come upon the world, have been brought upon her by an unholy Church. Whence came the darkness of the dark ages? From the Church of Rome. And if we want to see the world again sitting in Egyptian darkness, bound with fetters of iron, we have only to give up the faith, and to renounce holiness of life, and we may drag the world down again to the limbo of superstition, and bind her fast in chains of ignorance and vice. O Christian, the vows of God are upon you. You are God's priest: act as such. You are God's king: reign over your lusts. You are God's chosen: do not associate with Belial. Heaven is your portion; live like a heavenly spirit, so shall you prove that you have the true faith; but except ye do this, your end shall be to lift up your eyes in hell, and find yourself mistaken when it will be too late to seek or find a remedy. The Lord give us the faith and the life, for Jesus' sake. Amen.